



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



DEPARTMENT TO HOST SPRING MINI CONFERENCES

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs will host spring mini conferences May 8-10, 2012, in Rapid City, Pierre and Brookings. As in the past, the conferences will run from 10:00 am—3:00 pm.

Conferences will be held as follows:

- ⇒ May 8 — TREA — Rapid City (1981 E. Centre Street)
- ⇒ May 9 — American Legion Post — Pierre (520 S. Pierre Street)
- ⇒ May 10 — VFW Post — Brookings (520 Main Avenue)

Speakers at the conference will provide updates on the Simplified Notification Letter and other changes resulting from the VBA Transformation. There will also be training on the appeals process, roles and responsibilities of fiduciaries and a legislative update.

“Training programs sponsored by the Department assist our County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers in being at the forefront of the most demanding challenges confronting our state’s veterans,” said Steve Harding, Deputy Secretary for the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. “Working together we can ensure that we support and assist all South Dakota veterans and their families.”

Questions regarding the conferences should be forwarded to Larry Person (605-773-4982).

The Department will be hosting the Annual Benefits School August 27-29 in Pierre.

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Tuesday—May 8—Rapid City
TREA Headquarters—1981 E. Centre Street

Wednesday—May 9—Pierre
American Legion Post—520 S. Pierre Street

Thursday—May 10—Brookings
VFW Post—520 Main Avenue

NOTICE: All state offices will be closed Friday afternoon, April 6, 2012.

THREE BROTHERS, TWO WAR ZONES, ONE FAMILY DEPLOYED

The expression, "When the National Guard mobilizes for war; it's not just communities that deploy but also families," has held true for three brothers in the South Dakota Army National Guard. Sgt. 1st Class Michael Mullen, Staff Sgt. Kristian Mullen and Sgt. Erik Mullen are all currently serving overseas in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation New Dawn. Michael and Erik are serving with the 200th Engineer Company in Afghanistan, and Kristian is serving with the 139th Brigade Support Battalion's Logistics Task Force in Kuwait.

Kristian, who works full-time for Company A, 139th BSB in Miller as a truck driver, is performing duties in administration and customs for the 139th LTF in Kuwait. Comprised of 64 Soldiers from the Brookings, Redfield, Watertown, Miller, Mitchell, Rapid City and Sioux Falls areas, the 139th LTF deployed in July with a mission to provide supply, maintenance and transportation support to Special Operations Command units in Iraq. The LTF served about five months there before the drawdown of U.S. forces in December. Now, they are assisting in retrograde operations, in Kuwait, for the remainder of their tour. With 15 years of service in the military, five of which was on active duty with the U.S. Army, Kristian is not new to deployments. He deployed with Battery B, 1st Battalion 147th Field Artillery to Iraq in 2007. "This deployment is very different from the Battery B tour in every way," he said. "On my last deployment, we provided base security and convoy escort. On my current deployment, we are providing logistics support to Special Operations Command."



Michael, who works full-time as an operations noncommissioned officer for the 200th Engineer Co., is also on his second tour, deploying with the 200th to Iraq in 2003. As the operations NCO for the unit, he is responsible for running the operations section and tracking its 180 soldiers. Deploying in May, the 200th is a multi-role bridging company whose mission is to maintain, repair and replace existing military bridges throughout Afghanistan. In South Dakota, Michael tracks the unit's members and their activities between three locations; Pierre, Chamberlain and Mobridge. In Afghanistan, he has to track Soldiers and their operations in five regional commands throughout a country nearly the size of Texas.



With nearly six years of service in the National Guard, Erik, a teacher with the Todd County school district, is on his first deployment. Although there are challenges, Erik feels as if he is making a difference in Afghanistan, and finds ways to cope with the stress. "While at the bridge sites, we have had some Afghan National Army and Police helping with security, and that's a promising sign," said Erik. "The Afghanistan people use our bridges as much as we do. They depend on the bridges we build and maintain for their livelihood."

Despite the difficulties of serving overseas, the Mullen brothers said growing up together has helped them cope with the stresses of war. "Tough love – war between brothers was not uncommon, and I think it makes you stronger as a family," said Michael.

With love for their country, each other and their families, the Mullen brothers are ensuring the tradition of the National Guard's strong family roots take hold for generations to come.

WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTS PROGRAMS, RESOURCES FOR MILITARY, FAMILY SUCCESS

More than 150 service members, their families and volunteers attended the South Dakota National Guard Family Readiness Volunteer Workshop and Youth Symposium in Sioux Falls, March 24-25.

These events are used to educate commanders, first sergeants and chiefs, as well as volunteers, and encourage collaboration between them to make their unit successful.

Representatives from a wide range of military and family resources answered questions and shared details about their programs that are available to soldiers, airmen and their families.

While the adults were gaining contacts for military and family resources, the children stayed busy participating with team-building activities and listening to motivational speakers. Also, the SDNG Civil Operations team, with the Counterdrug program, brought in a variety of tools and interacted with the youth to teach them about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse.

During an awards banquet Saturday night, SMFS recognized service members and families by presenting 13 awards for dedication to the SDNG family programs.

The Family Readiness Workshop is just one of the many events the SMFS branch has going on throughout the year. There are several opportunities for volunteers to get involved at the state level and unit levels. The SMFS branch relies on volunteers to have successful events and makes it a priority to recognize outstanding support. Due to budget constraints, there was no workshop last year, so the awards for 2010-11 were presented during this year's banquet.

2010 Family Readiness Awards

Army Guard Volunteer of the Year – Angela Jorgenson

Army Guard Family of the Year – Lee and Kathy Severin Family

Air Guard Volunteer of the Year – Pam McDowell

Air Guard Military Member of the Year – Robert Funk

Air Guard Family of the Year – Kevin and Joyce Callies Family

2011 Family Readiness Awards

Army Guard Volunteer of the Year – Rosie Heinert

Army Guard Extra Mile Award – Dave Burr

Army Guard Gold Award – Michael Cartney

Air Guard Volunteer of the Year – Sarah Callies

Air Guard Military Member of the Year – Casey Bullis

Air Guard Family of the Year – Bill and Glenda Kluckman

SDNG Youth Volunteer of the Year – Casey Callies

National Guard Bureau Youth Volunteer of the Year – Casey Callies

Outstanding Support to SDNG Families – Arla Ruiter



"The miracle is this—the more we share, the more we have" - Leonard Nimoy

WOMEN VETERANS SYMPOSIUM AND HEALTH FAIR

WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE

*You served, you deserve
★ the best care anywhere.*



VA Black Hills Health Care System Women Veterans Advisory Committee
Invites You to Attend the

2012 Women Veterans Symposium & Health Fair

Saturday
April 21, 2012
10 am until 2 pm

Rushmore Plaza Holiday Inn
Hammons Conference Room
505 North Fifth Street
Rapid City, SD

Agenda for the Day

- 10:00 Health Fair Booths and Registration Open
 - 10:30 -11:00 Opening Ceremony and Welcome with Steve DiStasio, Director VABHHCS
 - 11:00-11:45 "Leaving, Experiencing, Reintegrating: A Deployed Journey" - Lori Vosika & Amber Heinert
VA Social Workers will speak about their recent deployments to Afghanistan
 - 12:00-12:30 Menopause - Jan Hines, PA
 - 12:45-13:15 Sexual Assault Awareness - Bridget Allen, RN
 - 13:30-1400 Emergency Contraception: Facts, Options & Access - Tara Butler, PharmD
- A buffet brunch will be available throughout the event

Please RSVP by Friday April 13, 2012 to Doreen Hughes 605- 490-7698 or 605-718-1095 ext 3019.

For questions please contact :
Dianna Monahan, WVPM at 605-720-7247



RESEARCH CAPS VA RECOGNITION OF WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Improving the health and health care of women veterans is a high priority within the VA said a panel of leading researchers. The VA's research commitment is multidisciplinary, covering the areas of biomedical, clinical, health services, and rehabilitation. To meet the needs of a growing, diverse demographic that spans all generations of women veterans — from an aging population of WWII Veterans to those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan—the pace of research activity in recent years has greatly accelerated.

Between 2004 and 2008, more research on the health of women veterans was published than in the previous 25 years combined. Today, the VA supports a significant amount of research on a wide variety of health issues faced by women. In fiscal year 2011, the agency funded 60 studies for a total investment of more than \$12 million.

VA women veteran's health research focuses on:

- Returning combat women Veterans – gender differences with regard to Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), post-deployment behaviors, and reintegration;
- Understanding barriers and improving access to VA health care for women veterans;
- Long-term health outcomes of women who served during the Vietnam era;
- Expanding mental health research including PTSD, substance abuse, and sexual trauma; and
- Basic research (biomedical) on breast cancer including hormones, regulation, genetic factors, as well as autoimmune diseases.

To bolster support for investigators conducting women's health services research, as well as recruitment and inclusion of women veterans in a wider array of studies, the VA Health Services Research and Development (HSR&D) launched the Women's Health Research Network (WHRN). The WHRN includes two partnered components: the Women's Health Research Consortium providing training and mentorship to researchers focusing on women's health research, and the Women's Health Practice-based Research Network supporting clinical research networks that test the VA-based women's health-related interventions and studies requiring recruitment of women veterans at multiple sites.

For more information about other roundtables, see www.research.va.gov/media_roundtable. For more information on VA Research, visit www.research.va.gov.

WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE

★ You served, you deserve the best care anywhere. ★

MAKE YOUR OWN history
VA CELEBRATES WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

WOMEN WHO STEPPED UP
WERE MEASURED AS CITIZENS
OF THE NATION, NOT AS WOMEN.
THIS WAS A PEOPLE'S WAR,
AND EVERYONE WAS IN IT.
COLONEL OVETA CULP HOBBS

Upcoming Events

Apr. 11-Veterans Enrollment and Information Fair—Kennedy Hall—Wanblee—1:00 pm
Apr. 12-Veterans Enrollment and Information Fair-CAP Office-Kyle—1:00 pm
Apr. 13—Purple Up for Military Kids Day
Apr. 21—Women Veterans Symposium and Health Fair—Rushmore Plaza Holiday Inn—Rapid City
Apr. 24—SD Veterans Council—10:30 am—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls
Apr. 27-29—VABHHCS Women's Retreat—Fort Meade
Apr. 28—Military Order of the Purple Heart State Convention—Rapid City
May 8—SDDVA Spring Mini Conference—Rapid City—1981 E. Centre Street—10:00 am
May 9—SDDVA Spring Mini Conference—Pierre—520 S. Pierre Street—10:00 am
May 10—SDDVA Spring Mini Conference—Brookings—520 Main Avenue—10:00 am
May 11-13—DAV 73rd Annual Department of SD Convention—Brookings
May 11—Veterans Town Hall Meeting—Brookings
May 12—60th Anniversary of the Korean War Commemoration Display—Brookings
May 16—Vietnam Veterans of America State Convention—Pierre
May 19—Armed Forces Day
May 21-22—South Dakota Veterans Commission Meeting—Pierre
May 28—Memorial Day
Jun. 7-10—VFW State Convention—Brookings
Jun. 9—Marine Corps League Department of SD Convention—Pierre
Jun. 10-12—Dare to Dream Conference—Spearfish Holiday Inn
Jun. 14—Flag Day
Jun. 14-17—American Legion State Convention—Watertown
Aug. 27-29—VSO Annual Benefits School—Pierre

Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer
South Dakota Department of the Military
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs
Soldiers and Sailors Building
425 E Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501
Phone: 605-773-8242
E-mail address: audry.ricketts@state.sd.us
Web site: <http://mva.sd.gov>

